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TO USMISSION SINAI PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 617 - JULY 31, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY

OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. SYRIAN TROOPS AND RIGHT-WING LEBANESE MILITIAMEN TRADED ROCKET AND ARTILLERY FIRE IN EAST BEIRUT LAST NIGHT, SHATTERING A THREE-DAY LULL IN FIGHTING. THE SYRIAN PEACEKEEPING COMMAND BLAMED THE CHRISTIANS, CLAIMING THAT THE FIGHTING WAS TRIGGERED BY RIGHTIST SNIPER FIRE ON SYRIAN PATROLS. SEVERAL SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE REPORTEDLY WOUNDED.

2. THE SYRIANS, APPARENTLY AS PART OF THEIR INCREASING PRESSURE ON THE PHALANGE PARTY, HAVE PUBLISHED AN ALLEGED 1958 LETTER FROM PIERRE GEMAYEL TO SHIMON PERES (THEN GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTRY). THE LETTER CONCERNED ALLEGED ISRAELI FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR A PLAN TO RESIST UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC INFLUENCE IN LEBANON. THIS WAS THE FIRST DIRECT SYRIAN ATTACK ON THE ELDER

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GEMAYEL. MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS ACCUSED THE RIGHTIST MILITIAS IN BEIRUT OF PROVOKING RECENT INCIDENTS TO PREVENT THE SENDING OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH, WHICH JEOPARDIZES THE POSITION OF THE "AGENTS" HADDAD AND SHIDIAC.

3. EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT SUPPORTERS OF FORMER PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH, MOST PROBABLY WITH SYRIAN ASSISTANCE, HAVE FOUNDED LEBANON'S FOURTH RADIO STATION NEAR ZGHORTA. IT IS CALLED "THE VOICE OF UNITED LEBANON." THE NEW STATION JOINS "RADIO LEBANON" (OFFICIAL, "THE VOICE OF LEBANON" (PHALANGE, AND "THE VOICE OF ARAB LEBANON" (MURABITUN). THERE IS ALSO A PALESTINIAN STATION. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

4. EGYPT. SADAT'S JULY 27 ADDRESS, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY CAIRO, WAS MORE NOTABLE FOR WHAT HE DID NOT SAY THAN FOR WHAT HE DID. HE DID NOT FURTHER CLOSE THE DOOR ON NEGOTIATIONS. SADAT GAVE NO HINT OF THE NEXT STEPS BUT CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT HE EXPECTS THE PEACE PROCESS TO CONTINUE. THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON BEGIN WERE LESS HARSH THAN SOME OF HIS RECENT STATEMENTS, ALTHOUGH BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND DAYAN WERE PORTRAYED AS DECEITFUL.

5. THE EMBASSY ALSO NOTED THAT THE LEFTIST NEWSPAPER AL-AHALI ON WEDNESDAY SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE US, ISRAEL, AND THE PEACE PROCESS. IT CLAIMED THAT ISRAEL AND THE

US WILL NEVER TAKE SERIOUSLY ANY EGYPTIAN INITIATIVE UNLESS THE COUNTRY WAS PREPARED TO USE EVERY WEAPON IN THE EGYPTIAN ARSENAL, INCLUDING THE MILITARY. THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT THE ARTICLE IS LIKELY TO ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE INTEREST SINCE ITS CONCLUSION ON THE US ROLE (AS THUS FAR ONLY A "SPECTATOR" IN THE PEACE PROCESS) IS WIDELY SHARED AMONG INTELLECTUALS.

6. SADAT APPEARS TO BE UNDER GREAT DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN
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PRESSURE TO CHANGE HIS APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS EVEN TO THE EXTENT OF WITHDRAWING SUPPORT FOR US PEACE EFFORTS. THIS PRESSURE IS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT COMES FROM SOME OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT'S MOST IMPORTANT BACKERS. SAUDI CONCERN PROBABLY WAS REINFORCED BY CROWN PRINCE FAHD, WHO MET WITH SADAT IN CAIRO OVER THE WEEKEND.

7. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, SADAT IS BEING PUSHED IN THE SAME GENERAL DIRECTION BY KEY ELEMENTS OF HIS CRITICAL DOMESTIC FOLLOWING. HIS SUPPORTERS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER THE US-EGYPTIAN LINK, WHICH THEY BELIEVE HAS COST EGYPT A GREAT DEAL IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC TERMS WITHOUT SUFFICIENT BENEFITS IN RETURN. MORE WORRISOME, HOWEVER, WOULD BE ANY INDICATIONS OF GROWING CONCERN WITHIN THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY.
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8. ISRAEL. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT IN A JULY 27 CONVERSATION WITH A WESTERN DIPLOMAT, LABOR PARTY LEADER PERES MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS CONCERNING THE PEACE PROCESS:

- (A) HE OPPOSES THE TABLING OF A US PEACE PLAN.
- (B) SADAT APPROVED THE BRANDT-KREISKY STATEMENT BEFORE ITS RELEASE.
- (C) THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT NEEDLESSLY HUMILIATED SADAT ON THE EL ARISH PROPOSAL.
- (D) PERES SUPPORTS THE APPROACH OF OBTAINING A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES BUT BELIEVES PRACTICAL

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WEST BANK COULD BE NEGOTIATED WITH EGYPT.

- (E) SADAT WOULD ACCEPT LESS THAN TOTAL WITHDRAWAL.

(F) SADAT'S MEDDLING IN ISRAELI POLITICS IS COUNTER-
PRODUCTIVE AND THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS STILL SOLID.
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9. PALESTINIANS. THE ICRC REPRESENTATIVE TOLD EMBASSY DAMASCUS THAT THE PALESTINIANS ARE GETTING "CUTE" IN THEIR HANDLING OF THE ISRAELI PRISONER CAPTURED IN SOUTH LEBANON IN APRIL. THE PLO HAS LIMITED THE NUMBER OF ICRC VISITS TO THE PRISONER TO BE IN ACCORD WITH THE ONCE EVERY TWO MONTHS VISITATION RIGHTS THE ISRAELIS GRANT FOR PALESTINIAN PRISONERS. THE PLO IS ALSO DEMANDING THAT THE ICRC SEND A COPY OF ITS REPORTS ON THE PRISONER TO THE PLO; TO DO SO WOULD BE THE FIRST TIME THE ICRC HAS SENT ITS REPORTS TO OTHER THAN A SOVEREIGN STATE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

10. IRAQ. THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION RECENTLY HELD IN BAGHDAD CONSTITUTED A MILESTONE FOR THE IRAQI REGIME. AS THEY MARK THEIR 10TH YEAR IN POWER, PRESIDENT AL-BAKR AND SADDAM HUSSEIN SEE FEW OTHER ARAB REGIMES THAT CAN MATCH THEIR LONGEVITY. SADDAM HUSSEIN'S EFFORTS ;O ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION WERE THE AILING PRESIDENT TO DIE MOREOVER, APPEAR TO HAVE PROVOKED NO SERIOUS DOMESTIC CHALLENGE. DESPITE THE BAATHIST CHARACTER OF THE REGIME, THE PARTY TRINITY OF GOALS -- UNITY, FREEDOM, AND SOCIALISM -- SEEMED TO CLASH WITH THE UNDERLYING THEMES OF THE CELEBRATION: STABILITY, PROSPERITY, AND INDEPENDENCE. THESE VIRTUES HAVE NOT TYPIFIED IRAQ FOR MANY YEARS.

11. WHILE ORDINARY IRAQIS PARTICIPATING IN THE FESTIVITIES WERE GRATEFUL FOR PROSPERITY AND STABILITY, FOREIGN
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OBSERVERS SEEMED PREOCCUPIED WITH BAGHDAD'S REDEFINITION OF INDEPENDENCE. WITH IRAQI-SOVIET STRAINS PROVIDING THE BACKDROP TO THE ANNIVERSARY, IRAQI SPOKESMEN APPEARED TO RELISH THE OPPORTUNITY POINTEDLY TO REITERATE THAT BAGHDAD WAS BEHOLDEN TO NO FOREIGN POWER. THE LOW-LEVEL SOVIET DELEGATION IN ATTENDANCE MUST HAVE BEEN NETTLED BY SADDAM'S COMMENT TO NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT DE BORCHGRAVE EQUATING SOVIET AND AMERICAN THREATS.

12. THE ANNIVERSARY APPEARS TO STAND AS A BENCHMARK NOT ONLY UNDERSCORING IRAQ'S STABILITY BUT ALSO THE SHIFT IN THE REGIME'S ARAB NATIONALIST GOALS. WHEREAS THE JULY 1958 REVOLUTION SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF IRAQI EFFORTS FUNDAMENTALLY TO ASSESS BAGHDAD'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST, IRAQ'S LEADERS 20 YEARS LATER ARE DETERMINED TO DISENTANGLE THEMSELVES FROM THE SOVIET BLOC.

13. SADDAM HUSSEIN SEEMED TO RULE OUT ANY IMPROVEMENT

IN FORMAL TIES WITH THE US AS A RESULT OF HIS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE BALANCE IN IRAQI FOREIGN RELATIONSHIPS. DURING A FIVE-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE ON JULY 21, HE STATED THAT, "WE ARE AGAINST AMERICA BECAUSE IT STANDS AGAINST THE ARAB NATION AND SUPPORTS ITS ENEMIES. EVEN IF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER COMMUNIST STATES BECOME STRAINED, WE CANNOT BECOME AMERICA'S FRIEND."

14. NONETHELESS, THE US MAY BE AN INDIRECT BENEFICIARY OF IRAQ'S EMPHASIS ON GREATER SELF-RELIANCE AND A SELECTIVE GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY. SADDAM ACKNOWLEDGED TO DE BORCHGRAVE THE LACK OF US INTERFERENCE IN IRAQI DOMESTIC AFFAIRS SINCE THE 1975 AGREEMENT WHICH ENDED THE

KURDISH REBELLION AND DECLARED THAT HE SHARED WITH THE
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SHAH A DETERMINATION TO PREVENT FURTHER COMMUNIST EXPANSION IN THE REGION. MOREOVER, OTHER AMERICAN FRIENDS IN THE GULF, SUCH AS KUWAIT, SEEM ENCOURAGED BY IRAQI INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE TIES WITH ITS GULF NEIGHBORS. FINALLY BAGHDAD'S RECENT DECISION TO GRANT AMNESTY TO OVER 6,000 PRISONERS, INCLUDING SOME POLITICAL DETAINEES, PERHAPS SUGGESTS THAT THE REGIME IS BECOMING CONCERNED ABOUT ITS DISMAL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. (CONFIDENTIAL)

15. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. THE ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AT THE NON-ALIGNED MEETING IN BELGRADE, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE ARAB FALLING OUT OVER THE SADAT INITIATIVE LAST NOVEMBER, AGREED ON A COMMON TEXT FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND PALESTINIAN ITEMS OF THE POLITICAL DECLARATION. ACCORDING TO THE EGYPTIANS, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE BASIS OF A SYRIAN-PLO DRAFT WHICH WAS AMENDED TO AVOID DIRECT CRITICISM OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE TOWARD ISRAEL.

16. THE RESULT IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE HARSH TEXT OF THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING BUREAU (NACB) IN HAVANA. THE NACB COMMUNIQUE'S SECTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST/PALESTINE CONTAINS SOME OF THE STRONGEST LANGUAGE EVER USED BY THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, PARTICULARLY AGAINST THE US, AND REAFFIRMS, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE COLOMBO SUMMIT IN AUGUST 1976, THE UNGA RESOLUTION EQUATING ZIONISM WITH RACISM. THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO ASKS NAM MEMBERS TO BEAR THIS IN MIND AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION SCHEDULED FOR GENEVA, AUGUST 14-25. IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THE AFRICANS, WHO HAVE BEEN THE KEY OPPONENTS OF THIS EXTREME ANTI-ISRAELI MEASURE IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, WILL OPPOSE THE UNITED ARAB POSITION, PARTICULARLY SINCE EGYPTIAN MINISTER GHALI HAS CALLED THE ARAB TEXT "A VICTORY FOR ARAB UNITY." (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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